

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In this Amendment, Applicants have amended independent claim 9 to more-particularly claim Applicants' invention. As will be further discussed below, Applicants respectfully submit that amended claim 9 is allowable over the cited references for at least the reason that the references, either alone or in combination, do not disclose the features of Applicants' invention where both the area of the metal component to be coated and the region of the component which is not to be coated are placed in a packed bed reactor for the production of the claimed locally limited diffusion layer on the metal component.

In Applicants' invention, as now more-particularly claimed, and as disclosed in Applicants' application at least at para. 0011 and in Figure 1, ***inside the packed bed reactor 1***, the region of the metal component which is *not to be coated*, and which is *adjacent to the donor pack 5 in the packed bed reactor*, is ***covered with a diffusion-blocking powder pack 6***. As further explained in Applicants' specification at least at paras. 0008-0009, this method, where both the area of the metal component to be coated and the region of the component which is not to be coated are placed in the packed bed reactor, provides for the production of the locally limited diffusion layer on the metal component, as further claimed in the preamble of claim 9. As such, in contrast to the prior art, it is not required with the present invention to coat an entire portion of the component in a non-specific manner.

Applicants respectfully submit that Cook, even if Cook discloses covering of a region of a component which is not to be coated, does not disclose the feature of Applicants' invention where both the area of the metal component to be coated and the region of the component which is not to be coated are placed in a same packed bed reactor. Applicants respectfully submit that Cook discloses separate tubes for the area to be coated and the area not to be coated. As can be seen in Figure 1 of Cook, and as disclosed at column 2, lines 20-29, a powder diffusion coating pack 16 fills the space around the upper portion 21 of the workpiece in

tube 11 and a powder masking pack 18 fills the space around the lower portion 22 of the workpiece in **tube 13**.

Therefore, Cook does not disclose the feature of Applicants' invention of placing the area of the metal component **to be coated** and a region of the component which is **not to be coated** in a **packed bed reactor**, and consequently, cannot further disclose the feature of Applicants' invention of covering of the region of the metal component which is not to be coated, and **which is adjacent to the donor pack in the packed bed reactor**, with a diffusion-blocking powder pack **in the packed bed reactor**. In Applicants' invention, the diffusion-blocking powder pack is provided in the same coating chamber that is utilized for the donor pack. Thus, the diffusion-blocking powder pack is utilized in conjunction with the donor pack to prevent the coating of a portion of the component that is disposed within the packed bed reactor 1. Therefore, in Applicants' invention, the diffusion layer on the metal component can be locally limited in the packed bed reactor, and as such, in contrast to Cook, it is not required to coat an entire portion of the component in a non-specific manner as in tube 11 of Cook. In Applicants' invention, both the area of the metal component to be coated and the region of the component which is not to be coated are placed in a same packed bed reactor. In Cook, the area to be coated and the area not to be coated are placed in separate tubes, i.e., tube 11 for the area to be coated and tube 13 for the area not to be coated. Therefore, for at least this reason, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claim 9 is allowable over the cited references.

Applicants also respectfully submit that in Cook, the entire retort 10 cannot be considered to be Applicants' claimed packed bed reactor, in which packed bed reactor in Applicants' invention both the area of the metal component to be coated and the region of the component which is not to be coated are placed, because Applicants' further claim that the heating to a temperature above 900°C in order to carry out the alitiation, siliconization and/or chromation is performed in the packed bed reactor. In Cook, any alitiation, siliconization and/or

chromation is performed ***only in tube 11*** and not in the entire retort 10. The tube 13 of retort 10 is only used to contain the powder masking pack 18.

Therefore, Applicants also respectfully submit that the entire retort 10 cannot be considered to be Applicants' claimed packed bed reactor because in Applicants' invention, the packed bed reactor contains both the area of the metal component to be coated and the region of the component which is not to be coated and the alitation, siliconization and/or chromation is performed in this packed bed reactor. In Cook, even if the retort 10 contains both the area to be coated and the area not to be coated, any alitation, siliconization and/or chromation is performed ***only in tube 11*** and not in the entire retort 10, i.e., not in tube 13 of retort 10 which only contains the powder masking pack 18. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that amended claim 9 is allowable over the cited references for at least this additional reason.

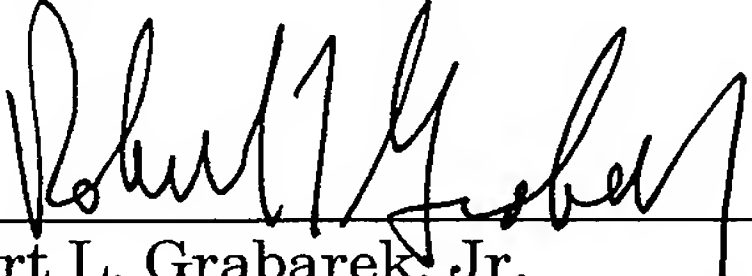
Applicants also respectfully submit that neither Grisik nor Park cure these deficiencies of Cook. In the Office Action, the Examiner has merely used Grisik in combination with Cook when rejecting claim 9 for Grisik's argued feature of diffusion coating material in the form of a paste. Further, the Examiner has acknowledged in the Office Action that Park does not disclose a masking technique that uses a diffusion-blocking powder and the Examiner uses Cook for this feature. However, Applicants respectfully submit that if Cook's teachings are used in Park, the same deficiencies of Cook will result.

Applicants respectfully submit that the application is now in condition for allowance. If there are any questions regarding this Amendment or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If required, this paper should be considered to include a Petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response. Please charge any such fee, any deficiency in fees, or credit any overpayment of fees, to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket No. 011235.57476US).

Respectfully submitted,
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